



Here is a Horse and harness too,  
Which ev'ry little boy may win,  
If they will strive to learn their books,  
And afterwards prove honest men.



See PAGE 5.



THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
*Mr. Sylvanus Ashfield,*  
who was born  
in the County of  
DURHAM.



London:  
Printed in the Year, 1796.



CHILDREN'S BOOK  
COLLECTION

LIBRARY OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
LOS ANGELES



See PAGE 5.



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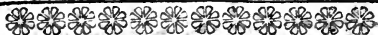
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THE STORY OF

*M. Sylvanus Ashfield.*



✻→✻ R. Sylvanus Ashfield was born  
✻ M ✻ in the county of Durham; at  
✻→✻ the age of twenty-one he became  
possessed of an easy fortune, and thought  
immediately of settling in the world.  
He married a lady of equal rank and  
fortune with himself, by whom he was  
blessed with three children; he was  
extremely fond of his little offspring;  
and whenever they were assembled  
around his knees, he thought himself  
happier than a king. He had a good

library, and when he was not with his wife and children, his time was spent in study. Tho' he had a general taste for all sorts of books, his inclination chiefly directed him to the poets, and particularly those of the dramatic kind. He had a strong passion for Shakespear's tragedies; he read them over and over without ceasing; and, sometimes, he thought how happy the people in LONDON must be, who had opportunities of going to the play-houses, where there these excellent pieces were exhibited. This notion, which occurred frequently to his mind, grew up to a most violent desire. He might indeed have taken a journey to LONDON, as nobody could have hindered him; but whenever he considered the matter

seriously, reason opposed so absurd an excursion; and he was conscious, that all his friends would blame him for taking a journey of 200 miles, merely for the sake of seeing a play. He continued two whole years in this distracted condition, and became melancholy and penfive.

Just at this time, however, he received a letter from town, with an account that an aunt of his was dead, who had appointed him her sole executor. It was therefore become absolutely necessary that he should go up to LONDON, to settle her affairs. All his friends were surprised at the joy he expressed on hearing this news, as he always had been esteemed a disinterested person.



He was really uneasy that they began to think him covetous, but he could not bring himself to declare the true cause of his satisfaction. A French author observes very judiciously, that we are more jealous of the opinion others form of our understanding, than we are with respect to what they think of our morals; and we chuse rather to be thought immoral than ridiculous, or of a weak capacity: at least then he acted upon his principle.

He immediately ordered his horse out,



and left all the world at liberty to think as they pleased, as his whole care was in hastening every thing for his departure. He scarce allowed Mrs. Ashfield time to put up a few shirts in a cloak-bag; and tho' he had the tenderest love for his family, the tears they shed when he rode off, were by him totally disregarded; his mind was wholly agitated by the pleasures he hoped to find in

seeing a play. He rode on very quick, scarce allowing himself time for refreshment. When he alighted at the Inn, the first question he asked was, 'at what o'clock they opened the play-house.' and he was answered, about five. As the time drew nearer his impatience increased. When he came to the play-house door, it was exactly four o'clock. He was enraged at the porter, and believed he delayed opening the door for the purpose. However it was set open at last, and in our hero rushed. He surveyed with eagerness the place he had so long and so often wished to see; and at last seated himself. Mean while the company crowded in, and seemed to share with him in impatience: some by bawling,

others by thumping their sticks upon the floor, and some by whistling. At last the long wish'd-for moment comes, the curtain is drawn up, and, — What do you think? — A man of enormous bulk comes in, and seats himself just before our hero, and almost obstructs a sight of the stage. This inconvenience, however, he remedied by leaning on one side, till his back was almost broken. The actors at last appeared, and for a time he seemed to have lost his faculties.

He only came to himself again at the close of the first act. He then began to consider the pleasure he had received by this novelty: it was really great, but far from answering his expectations.

This disappointment occasioned a disgust; however, he was still determined to examine the play, and to remark its defects; so, that at last, he found fault with the author, the players, the decorations, and even thought that every particular fell short of that perfection to which it might have been carried, to make the whole complete.

The farce, which was a pantomime, was still more disagreeable, being in itself extremely indecent and immoral. The exhibition was at last was at an end, and he returned to the inn very pensive and discontented. While he was in this melancholy mood, he made the following pertinent reflections:

—My case, said he to himself, is very

common. A young lady at fourteen or fifteen, hears of what I may call the **GRAND PLAY, OR, COMEDY OF THE WORLD**; she longs to be seen at this public spectacle, and endeavours to hasten the long-desired hour; at length she appears at assemblies. What forecast, what care is had to be in a proper place to see and be seen in a manner the most likely to sooth and flatter her vanity! But when she fancies she has succeeded, and that she is fixed to content, in comes a taller person, that is, a lady of greater beauty, a finer shape, more wit, and possessed of talents which she wants; she seizes and fixes the eye of every one in the company, and eclipses the young person that thought herself so happy, and who, in order to

catch a side glance, and have share in the admiration of the spectators, is forced to be on the rack, and in the most uneasy posture, where this dangerous rival shines with superior endowments. Though the constraint is greatly troublesome, she keeps up her heart, and bears her present situation, with the prospect of the pleasure she hopes to find in this meeting. How great is her surprise, and how affecting her concern to see, that the pleasure does not answer her expectation ! she is frustrated, she does not meet with half, no, not a quarter of the satisfaction, she proposed to herself ; she grieves, she begins to loath the world, that requires so much, and returns so little ; but this disgust too often fails

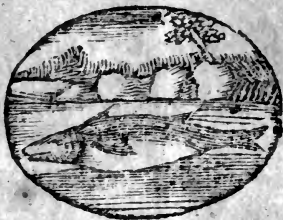
of bringing a love retreat, and ends in being out of temper with the faults of the play, and the performers; that is, the incidents of life; the perfidiousness of indifferent persons, and the ingratitude of those who were thought friends. One is deceived on all sides, obliged to take a share in the trouble of this person, and to suffer the unjust proceedings of that other; this is not all; this Comedy, or Universal Pantomime, which is not very entertaining, is very scandalous; what is heard and what is seen, disposes generally to evil. Who has the holy fear of the Lord, dreads being sullied with this filth; he must be ever on his guard, always resisting, and engaged in an endless struggle. Here the eyes and the ears



must be constantly shut; the tongue must be almost under a perpetual restraint. What a pity! in fine, the play draws to an end, night, that is old age, comes on. What remains, but very little pleasure, great uneasiness, unprofitable desires and tormenting remorse? Happy those, who, like myself disgusted with the first representation, take a handsome resolution and follow my example,

FINIS.





See thro' the stream how round the  
bait,

The wanton FISHES frisk about ;  
But when ensnar'd, the angler draws  
The poor deluded captive out.